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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0909   03/02/07

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    ~ Google Success Wake-Up ~ Word Perfect Lightning ~ NY Youths Cop Deal!
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->From the Editor's Keyboard              "Saying it like it is!"
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Ahhh, Spring is in the air. Well, not literally, at least this week.
But, the sun is setting later and later, and the temperatures are getting
better overall. Yes, it's true that we had some quick snow storms this
week, but mostly rain. Spring is coming. In fact, I'm heading out to
the annual golf expo this weekend to check out all the new technology in
equipment, and all the other goodies out there. While I don't need
anything new this year, who knows what new gadget I might find!

I didn't have much to say this week, but I did read an interesting
editorial in my local newspaper this week. The columnist essentially was
a humorous piece that discussed the writer's dismay at what is being
reported as news these days. After all, what is the fascination with
Hollywood stories, and the like? These kinds of stories put a new twist
on sensationalism. Really, who cares about Oprah's weight issues, or
Brittany's problems? Do we really care that Eminem and his wife have
divorced for the second or third time? Or who is sleeping with who and
having who's child out of wedlock?

After reading this editorial, I watched my evening newscast. There were
more stories of the above nature than real news. About a 60-40 split.
As this columnist pointed out, why aren't we demanding more in the news
that we watch, read, or listen? Have we become desensitized to the real
news and now need "fantasy fixes?" I mean look at the coverage to the
Anna Nicole Smith debacle the past few weeks!! There's been more coverage
for that "story" that even her bra couldn't contain it all! Weeks! Do
people really know what is important any longer?

Well, it's a real wonder. I studied journalism, many years ago. Now I
remember [again] why I didn't pursue it more. Even watching cartoons is
more entertaining than some of the newscasts I've seen lately. Ever
notice...?

Until next time...

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                 Working USB Driver For Atari ST/Falcon Sighted

Coda has got his USB mouse driver working on a Netus-Bee prototype. A video of it in action can be found at http://hardware.atari.org/news.htm

He is also apparently investigating a fix for USB printer support as well.

I hope the benefits of this work should also translate to those people who have got an EtherNat as well. :-)

URL: http://hardware.atari.org/news.htm

                        ST Magazine 139/140 Is Out

Hello Atarists!

ST Magazine issue 139/140 is available. This issue is very late and we are sorry for this. Due to the big delay, we decided to make a 48-page issue (instead of 36).

By the way, issue 141 will be ready very soon (end of February).

All ST Magazine issues (except 132) are available at 16/32 Systems. Don't miss the special issue about the 20th anniversary of the Atari ST.

And for console lovers, ReVival will be available soon at 16/32 Systems because the latest issues are now translated into English (issues 29 to 32). Of course, ReVival also speak about Atari consoles!

Link to 16/32 Systems:
http://www.1632-sales.zenwebhosting.com/acatalog/ST_Magazine.html

Link to ST Magazine web site:
http://stmagazine.org/
- Note our web site includes fresh news about Atari computers -

Thanks for reading :)

ST Magazine team

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                        PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                       compiled by Joe Mirando
                         joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, it's been more than a week since I "up and quit" my job, and my head is still in a blue funk. I never really expected that.

So here I've sat, for days and days, staring at a blank word processor window, wondering how to even START a rØsumØ (hereafter referred to as simply "resume", since it's a pain in the butt to dig out accented characters).

I'll tell you one thing... it's at times like this that you find out who your real friends are. Aside from various non-work friends who've called to find out what the truth of the situation was, I've had four guys that I'd worked with call me to wish me well and offer any help they might be able to provide... of course, there isn't any help they can provide, so it was a 'safe' offer. <g>

Four guys might not sound like a lot... and in truth, it's not... but we're still talking about a quarter of the people I dealt with daily. I hadn't expected the percentage to be that high. Let's face it, people have their own lives to worry about. They've got bills and spouses and kids and such, and coming straight out and buddying up to a guy who just "up 'n quit" might not be the best way to ensure longevity at a small company.

Anyway, I've had... well... not a lot of people, but enough so that I know I've got a little bit of a network to count on, and that's a surprisingly good feeling.

It's not even the ones that say, "call me if you need anything". It's the ones who take the time to say, "I've been there. Trust me, it gets better" that help the most.

So the next time you have a friend that's in the position that I'm in now, don't give him the "call me if you need anything" speech, give him the "things'll get better once you get your head clear and get back on track" speech.

Well, let's get to the news, hints tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Peter Slegg asks about hard drive partitions:

"My 2Gb disc is getting quite full. I also have a 20Gb disc in the Milan all ready partitioned. A few years ago I copied the 2Gb discs partitions onto the 20Gb disc. I also have some big files on the bigger HDs partitions.

I now want to copy my main partitions onto the bigger drive. Is there am easy way of doing this ?

I was thinking of doing a cp -prvu from bash but there may be a better way.

But before I do, there is currently a problem with the first partition on the 20Gb drive.

When I boot the Milan it often reports a problem. I use 1-15-12 so it doesn't give much detail. With 1-16 it says:

FATFS[N] vital data illegal
(recsize=0, numcl=-4177919)

I have tried to fix it with a few disc apps but nothing will touch it.

Does anyone know how to fix this or should I just wipe the partition
and try again?"

The author of HD Driver, Dr Uwe Seimet, tells Peter:

"Since it is not the hard disk driver that reports an error but the
operating system this looks very much like a logical error in the FAT.
It does not seem to be a physically damaged hard disk driver, otherwise
the error message should be different, e.g. an alert box displayed by
the hard disk driver.

In case of an error in the FAT most hard disk tools should be able to
find it and maybe also to repair it. DISKUS has special functions for
checking and repairing FAT (FAT16, not FAT32) file systems, but it is
German only. If you know a bit German you can give the demo version a
try: http://www.seimet.de/diskus_english.html. But please note that the
demo can only check file systems, not repair them."

Peter replies to Uwe:

"I am sure it is just a logical disc error.

I have the Diskus demo but I don't speak enough German to risk using it.
When I try Diamond Edge it won't switch to that disc because it doesn't
recognize the boot sector. Is there anything I can do with HDdrutil?"

Uwe tells Peter:

"No, HDDRUTIL won't help you here. In general, if a boot sector is not
recognized you should read the physical hard disk sector the boot
sector resides on in order to check and/or repair the contents. With
Diamond Edge you can surely do that.

I wonder, though, why MiNT seems to report something on a FAT sector.
Looks as if MiNT can access the boot sector but Diamond Edge cannot?

As far as DISKUS is concerned, since the demo version cannot write data
to the drive you cannot damage anything with it."

'FireFlyST' asks a question that comes up every so-often:

"I'm curious, what sort of differences are there in the RGB signals
that component video sends out from, say, a DVD player, versus what
comes out of an ST? I'm not talking about composite or S-Video, I'm
talking about the red/green/blue RCA jacks on things like DVD players
and such. I'd like to get a crisp picture from the ST over these
lines if possible. Anyone got any ideas?"

'Kryten' simply tells FFST:

"http://www.howell1964.freeserve.co.uk/Atari/ST/Atari_ST_Video.htm"

'PKPera' adds:

"ST has RGB as it is usual by computers. But I saw some DVD players
which have RGB outputs too - probably not case in US. You may buy some
RGB monitor - not VGA. Amiga, C64 monitors are mostly good. Another
solution is S-video output - it can be made on every ST. Not so good as
RGB, but is cheap: http://www.ppest.org/atari/stvid/stvid.php
A third solution is moving to Europe."

Hallvard Tangeraas asks about a particular file type:

"I downloaded the following file:
http://atari4ever.free.fr/hardware/zip/rgb2comp.zip
from Vezz' Atari hardware hack site, in the "video" section (http://
atari4ever.free.fr/hardware/video.html) and after unzipping it found a
file named "CONV.SCD" which looks like it's UUencoded or something
similar, but alas UUdecoding doesn't work.

The readme file says:
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conv.scd   -- This is a monochrome degas picture scoded using Moshe
Braner's scoding program. You will need sdecode to decode it to Degas
format.

I have "Esscode", but apparently the above is referring to something
else as it doesn't work with this file. Any ideas?"

'ProToS' tells Hall:

"Only the sdecode program can make it back to a degas picture.

you can find it here:
<http://www.umich.edu/~archive/atari/Misc/scode.arc>
scode.tos and sdecode.tos are in this archive."

Hall tries it out and tells ProToS:

"Thanks. It worked!"

Last week we heard a call for ideas for add-ons, and a lot of people
responded with some very good ideas. It continues this week. Let's pick
up in mid-thought with 'Jammer' talking about one of the things he'd
like to see:

"... and a compact flash card (or SD etc) adapter that plugs into the
hard disk port. Imagine your ST hooked up to a flat screen and with a
1Gb CF card drive. Fantastic!"

PKPera tells Jammer:

"I have some ideas about how to realize such an adapter (already have

internal IDE interface which works with CF cards too).

People want, of course, an external solution, without soldering into machine. (Flat screen is attached too, btw)

Now, the question is how big is the interest for such an interface. In any case, it will be much faster than Satandisk, which is too slow for any serious usage. Compact Flash is best for ACSI ports from some reasons, and costs just little more than SD cards.

Let interested people post here. Price should be under 40 Euros in any case."

'MG' tells PK:

"Yes, anything that would stop having to swap Floppies to save/load stuff! Mine is a 4mb STf single floppy... When I can be bothered, I do use a resetable RAM disk, but Cubase 3 and Pro 24 don't like it ..."

Peter Slegg adds his thoughts:

"With all this USB work in the pipeline for ST, Falcon and even the 8-bitters (I believe). I feel that us clone users might be left behind. Hardware-wise these are the easiest machines to USB enable, I could just stick a pci card in. Have any tests been done with a Milan and a pci USB card?"

Jammer asks about a particular monitor:

"I found a monitor on eBay (search computing for RGB) with ....

17" TFT Monitor with DVI + RGB Input
15-pin D-sub RGB Analog connector

Would it be possible to use this with an ST?"

Coda tells Jammer:

"No. You are confused by the letters 'RGB'. This is a standard VGA monitor plus a DVI connector."

Ronald Hall adds:

"I think it's still the bottom line, that the device, no matter whether it's a monitor, LCD TV, or whatever, has to be able to sync down to 15khz horizontal, that's the key, isn't it?"

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
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              Sony Expects To Resolve PS3 Shortages By May

Sony Corp. is on track to ship 2 million PlayStation 3s to North American
stores by the end of March, and expects shortages of the video game
console to have completely eased by May, a top executive said on Tuesday.

"April or May is when we feel like we're going to catch up to demand and
have product fully in stock across North America and stay there," said Jack
Tretton, chief executive of Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Asked about widespread reports on video game Web sites that stacks of
unsold PlayStation 3s are a common sight in many electronics shops,
Tretton told Reuters in an interview that the console was still out of
stock in some areas three months after its November launch.

"It's a testament to the fact that we've been able to manufacture and ship
units on a greater pace than any previous console," Tretton said.

"Our goal is to fill shelves across the United States. Our goal is not to
have empty shelves, it's to have full shelves. If we have empty shelves,
that's one less consumer who could have bought a PlayStation 3," Tretton
said.

Sony's PlayStation 3 is the cornerstone of the consumer electronics
giant's strategy to dominate home entertainment.

The PlayStation 3 - which costs $500 or $600 depending on features - has a
hard drive to store game data and music, and can play DVDs using Sony's
Blu-Ray high-definition technology.

But the machine faces stiff competition from Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360,
which launched a year earlier and has an extensive system for online play,
and Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s Wii, which features a unique motion-sensitive
controller.

Consumers and analysts have praised the PlayStation 3's graphical prowess
and potential, but they have also raised concerns about its high price, a

weak line-up of current games and what has been perceived as arrogance on Sony's part about the desirability of its flagship product.

"The PS3's biggest opponent right now is itself. It's really just competing against its own PR," said Jeremy Dunham, PlayStation editor at entertainment Web site IGN.

"The PS3's problem right now is there have been a lot of broken promises. It has a lot of things to overcome, but the brand name, the franchises and good exclusives ... all should generate interest," Dunham said.

Tretton, who helped Sony launch the original PlayStation in North America in 1995, said Sony was on track to ship 2 million PlayStation 3s to retailers by the end of March.

"We're in pretty good shape to do that. The early returns are quite favorable," Tretton said.

In January, Sony sold 244,000 PlayStation 3s, compared to 294,000 for the Xbox 360 and 436,000 for the Wii.

The company has said its target is to ship 6 million PS3s worldwide by the end of March.

PlayStation 3 In Europe Will Play Fewer Old Games

The European version of PlayStation 3 will play fewer PlayStation 2 video games when it launches on March 23 compared with models launched earlier in Japan and America, Sony Corp said on Friday.

"The backwards compatibility is not going to be as good as the U.S. and Japan models," a Sony spokesman said.

PlayStation 3 (PS3) was first launched in Japan and North America in November and the model that will be introduced in Europe will be designed differently.

Software will take over some of the functionality that was originally taken care of by dedicated chips, which means far fewer PlayStation 2 (PS2) games can be played on a European PS3 compared with the Japanese and American PS3 models which play 98 percent of old games.

"Sony is managing expectations by saying now that the new console will play fewer of the old games, and that's a good thing," said analyst Alex Kwiatowski at British market research group Vertical Market Technologies.

Over the last 18 months Sony has had a series of public relations disasters, including a recall of nearly 10 million of its computer batteries, PS3 delays and a software program on Sony Entertainment music CDs that breached computer security.

Kwiatowski said gamers with a PS2 would have to hold onto their device to play their current collection.

"I'm as disappointed as the next game player about the reduced backward compatibility, but even the most nostalgic, misty-eyed gamers will have their steely hearts impressed by the new features that PS3 games

provide," Kwiatowski said.

The PS3's graphics and sound capabilities are much improved over the PS2.

"Rather than concentrate on PS2 backwards compatibility, in the future, company resources will be increasingly focused on developing new games and entertainment features exclusively for PS3," Sony Computer Entertainment said in a statement.

About one million units will be available at the European launch next month, as many as were made available in the United States during the first six weeks after the launch last year.

Sony loses money at first on each PS3 sale due to high production costs.

But Nobuyuki Oneda, Sony's chief financial officer, said in January the company aims to bring the negative PS3 margin to break even toward the second half of the next business year, which starts in April, by component cost savings on chips driving the PS3.

Online Addict Dies After "Darathon" Session

An obese 26-year-old man in northeastern China died after a "marathon" online gaming session over the Lunar New Year holiday, state media said on Wednesday.

The 150-kg (330-lb) man from Jinzhou, in Liaoning province, collapsed on Saturday, the last day of the holiday, after spending "almost all" of the seven-day break playing online games, the China Daily said, citing his parents.

Xu Yan, a local teacher, said the "dull life" during the holiday prompted many people to turn to computer games for entertainment.

"There are only two options. TV or computer. What else can I do in the holiday as all markets, KTV and cafeterias are shut down?" the paper quoted Xu as saying.

China has seen an alarming rise in the number of teenage and young adult Internet addicts in recent years, despite attempts to restrict minors from cybercafes and limit online game playing times.

About 2.6 million - or 13 percent - of China's 20 million Internet users under 18 are classed as addicts, state media have reported.

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                        A-ONE's Headline News
                   The Latest in Computer Technology News
                      Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

The success of Google opened Microsoft's eyes to the riches available in Web advertising, the chief technologist for the world's largest software maker said on Tuesday.

"It was a wake-up call within Microsoft," company Chief Software Architect Ray Ozzie said at a Goldman Sachs investor conference in Las Vegas.

Google's success alerted Microsoft to the financial power of advertising and how it might complement revenue from subscriptions for its desktop software, he said.

"This very clearly caused an inflection point within our industry and within Microsoft of understanding advertising as an economic engine," Ozzie said in a question-and-answer session monitored online.

Ozzie stepped into the top technical position at Microsoft last year, replacing co-founder Bill Gates and spearheading an important transition for the $44 billion company to extend its reach beyond the computer desktop.

Google derives almost all of its $10.6 billion in annual revenue from advertising, while Microsoft's loss-making Internet arm generated $2.3 billion in sales last year. Microsoft makes most of its money from its dominant Windows operating system and Office software suite.

"It is critical for Ray Ozzie to rethink how Microsoft competes in the Web world, because it is a totally different landscape out there and if Microsoft doesn't adapt it will get left behind," said Morningstar analyst Toan Tran.

The challenge for Ozzie is to deliver a host of Web services alongside Microsoft's classic out-of-the-box software to remain competitive with online rivals like Salesforce.com, Yahoo Inc. and others without compromising its core business.

"In most cases it's not going to be cannibalistic, but on the fringes there will be some substitution of one thing for another," said Ozzie.

For example, Ozzie said some small businesses may opt for Office Live - an online service that helps set up Web sites, company e-mail and Web applications for collaborative projects - instead of a company server running on Windows.

Microsoft believes new Web services will work in tandem with software installed on the computer, a vision that differs from "software as a service" advocates who expect services delivered over the Web to eventually replace software that resides on local PCs.

"The services opportunity is ... really more than just taking what's on the PC and putting it up on the Web," said Ozzie, who gained respect as a technology guru by developing ground-breaking software including Lotus Notes and who has made only a few public appearances since taking over for Gates.

When Microsoft responded to a strong competitor in the past, the Redmond, Washington-based company discovered new, and sometimes unintended, business opportunities. Ozzie said he expects the Web services fight to

be no different.

Out of Microsoft's competition with Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2 video game console emerged the strategy for its Xbox Live online game platform, the backbone of its current entertainment strategy, according to Ozzie.

A side effect of its competition with Google, Ozzie said, is that Microsoft can now support businesses with advertising when traditional licenses wouldn't have worked. Also, the data centers and services platforms that Microsoft is building for itself could eventually be made available to customers.

"That's going to present tremendous business opportunities," said Ozzie, who joined the company in 2005 when Microsoft acquired Groove Networks, a company he started.

Feature List for Upcoming Firefox 3.0 Browser

If the Firefox browser were a car, it would be in the garage right now being souped up by an anxious group of gear heads.

When Firefox 3.0 is released later this year, the open-source browser is likely to contain a host of new features, including offline support for Web applications and new bookmark and search features. Mozilla released the second alpha version of Firefox 3.0 earlier this month.

While the final feature set hasn't been determined, Firefox 3.0 will also contain elements for its 4.0 release and beyond, said Mike Schroepfer, vice president for engineering for Mozilla Corp., during a stop in London on Tuesday. The browser is due out in the second half of the year.

"What we're trying to do with all of these things is lay the foundation," Schroepfer said.

Perhaps most exciting could be Firefox's ability to support writing an e-mail in, for example, Gmail while offline, with the data sent later when a user is connected to the Internet again. Ultimately, Mozilla engineers are aiming for an integration between the browser and Web-based services that is as smooth running as a desktop application, Schroepfer said.

So far, engineers have made Firefox work with Zimbra, an open-source e-mail, messaging and VOIP (voice over Internet Protocol) application. With a bit of code from Google Inc. and Microsoft Corp., it would be possible to integrate with Gmail and Hotmail and other e-mail services.

To do offline support, engineers have overcome the hurdle of how to store data locally on the computer, Schroepfer said. The feature will make it into Firefox 3.0, although the user interface is still under development, he said.

Other changes could come to "bookmarks" and "history," two features that have seen relatively little innovation, he said. Mozilla would like to create a function where bookmarks could be automatically sorted based on popularity and frequency rather than the static presentation now.

Firefox 3.0 will also have a small, embedded database - SQL Lite - that will eventually be used for full-text indexing of the browser's "history."

Users could search for images and text and see the cached page. The feature, however, may not make it into the 3.0 release, he said.

"The advantage of the database is that we can search your cache," Schroepfer said.

Most importantly, Firefox has to be fast and standards compliant, he said. Some users have complained about Firefox sucking up processing power because of add-ons or extensions, a popular aspect of Firefox where small programs can be downloaded and used into the browser to add new functions.

But extensions sometimes tax system resources, in part because it's often part-time hobbyists doing the coding, Schroepfer said.

Mozilla will soon set up a shared library of tested code that extension writers can download and use, Schroepfer said. Mozilla also relaunched its extension site, cutting back on the number of extensions listed so first-time users don't overload their browsers and dampen their experience.

In a few weeks, discussion forums will also be set up for developers to exchange feedback, since code writers sometimes don't know of the problems, he said.

Firefox 4.0 will support the JavaScript 2 language, now under development in part by Mozilla's Chief Technology Officer Brendan Eich and the ECMA International standards body, Schroepfer said. The idea behind the JavaScript revamp is to make high-performance Web applications easier to write and assemble for people with less coding expertise, he said.

"It's less about making it possible and more about making it easy," Schroepfer said.

                     WordPerfect Lightning Beta Available

Corel Corp. released a free public beta of WordPerfect Lightning on Tuesday, a word processor that blends a desktop-based application with online collaboration and storage features.

WordPerfect Lightening has a "Notes" tool to save text and images from the Internet, in addition to a "Viewer" that can handle the portable document format (.pdf), WordPerfect and Microsoft Corp.'s Word documents. It also has a "Navigator" to organize files.

The desktop application is 20 M bytes and is compatible with Microsoft's new Vista OS and XP, Corel said.

If users are not at computer running the WordPerfect Lightning desktop application, they can use Lightning's online site to access files stored by Corel.

Users get 200 M-bytes of storage space to back up data such as e-mails, contacts, bookmarks and documents, in addition to a calendar and free e-mail.

WordPerfect Lightning is one of a wave of applications integrating desktop applications with online features for greater access and easier collaboration. In March 2006, Google Inc. bought Upstartle LLC, a company

that created the online word processor Writely.

Free offerings such as Writely and WordPerfect Lightening are seen as a challenge to Microsoft's Office programs, which dominate productivity applications and brings the company much of its revenue.

With WordPerfect Lightening, Corel is offering a free trial version of its WordPerfect Office X3 productivity suite, whose standard edition retails for US$269.99.

User-Privilege Flaw Hits Vista

A security firm has discovered one of the first security flaws to directly affect Windows Vista, a bug that it claims allows local users to escalate their privileges.

The flaw involves Windows' system for managing user security levels, User Account Control (UAC), which was introduced with Vista. UAC is designed to limit the damage that can be caused by mass attacks such as worms by giving standard users limited privileges, a practice common with other operating systems.

Combined with a remote vulnerability, the newly discovered bug could essentially render UAC useless, escalating standard user privileges to system-level access, according to eEye.

"A flaw exists within Windows Vista that allows local privilege escalation to System," eEye said in a note on its website. The company said it reported the bug to Microsoft on Jan. 19, and plans to disclose further details once a fix is available.

According to eEye co-founder Marc Maiffret, the flaw is similar to a buffer overflow.

Microsoft said in a statement it is aware of the report and is investigating. "The company is not aware of any public discussion of the report itself," Microsoft stated.

UAC is by far the most visible change in Vista's security system, to the point where some have criticized it as too intrusive. At the same time, researchers have already begun picking holes in the system.

What's more, Microsoft recently made it clear that it doesn't consider UAC a security feature, since it has deliberately left particular holes in the system for ease of use. That means bugs in UAC aren't security flaws, Microsoft says.

"Neither UAC elevations nor Protected Mode IE define new Windows security boundaries," wrote Mark Russinovich, a Technical Fellow in Microsoft's Platform and Services Division, in a blog post earlier this month. "Because elevations and ILs (Integrity Levels) don’t define a security boundary, potential avenues of attack, regardless of ease or scope, are not security bugs."

Instead of being a security barrier, UAC is intended "to get us to a world where everyone runs as standard user by default and all software is written with that assumption," Russinovich wrote.

Microsoft's OneCare Finishes Last in Antivirus Test

Microsoft's Windows Live OneCare came in at the bottom of the heap of 17
antivirus software applications in a test against nearly half a million
viruses, Trojans, worms, and other malware, according to Austrian
antivirus researcher Andreas Cleminti.

Cleminti posts quarterly results of tests of top antivirus products on his
AV Comparatives Web site (www.av-comparatives.org). G Data Security's
AntiVirusKit blocked 99.5 percent of the malicious threats. AEC's TrustPort
AV WS, Anvira's AntiVir PE Premium, MicroWorld's eScan AntiVirus,
F-Secure's Anti-Virus, and Kaspersky Labs' AV also scored high marks.

However, big-brand solutions such as Symantec's Norton AntiVirus and
McAfee's VirusScan could not keep up. Symantec's software scored 96.8
while McAfee scored 91.6. And Microsoft's OneCare blocked only 82.4 percent
of malicious software.

In his report, Clementi suggested that end users keep in mind that the
detection rate is only one aspect of a complete antivirus product. He also
offered some additional factors to consider, including looking into other
independent test results.

"We encourage our readers to also have a look at tests done by other test
centers with large collections of verified malware," he noted, "as tests
based solely on viruses listed on the Wildlist give a fairly limited view
of the detection capabilities."

This is not the only test that has found Microsoft's security software
coming up short. In another test, Microsoft's antispyware tool, Windows
Defender, also fared poorly. Australian security company PC Tools - which
makes and sells its own antispyware product - found Windows Defender to
detect only between 46 percent and 53 percent of the spyware thrown at it.

According to Michael Sutton, a security evangelist with SPI Dynamics, the
downfall of current antivirus products stems from the fact that they are
primarily signature-based. Hard-coded signatures rely on exact matches
before they trigger, he explained, and malware writers have realized that
even simple mutations can bypass signature-based algorithms.

"Unfortunately, heuristic-based products have thus far fallen short on
their promise to raise the bar," Sutton said. "The comparison among
antivirus vendors therefore boils down to who has the best testing lab and
who can write and push out new signatures the quickest."

So long as antivirus products rely on signature-based algorithms, the arms
race between malware writers and antivirus companies will continue, Sutton
predicted, and end users will always face a window of vulnerability when
new viruses are launched.

"I.T. Administrators should pay attention to product evaluations but be
sure to look at multiple tests, as each will use different test cases
which naturally bias the results," Sutton cautioned, noting that it is
also important that product evaluations be run in house. "No one knows
your own environment better than you."

Sutton concluded by suggesting the use of third-party tests to narrow the field to a short list of contenders, then making the final procurement decision on the basis of independent analysis.

Build Your Own Social Sites, Netscape Founder Says

Ning, the latest startup of Netscape co-founder Marc Andreessen, is looking to get a jump ahead of MySpace and Facebook by giving consumers free tools to create and operate specialized online social networks of their own.

The two-year-old Silicon Valley-based company said the new service, to be introduced on Tuesday, allows casual Web users to create, within a matter of minutes, a highly customized social network for one's friends, family or acquaintances.

Social networks have caught fire in recent years among active Web users who use them to connect to people with shared interests. Popular sites range from hangouts for teenagers and their friends to video game fans or business professionals.

Sites like MySpace offer Web users individual profile pages they can use to connect to friends, but typically keep control of the underlying network, including advertising sales.

By contrast, users within each Ning network can select the latest Web features for watching videos online, creating a photo slideshow, listening to music or publishing a blog. Members have far greater flexibility over the look of their personal profile pages, buddy lists and site color schemes.

"Other social network sites ask you to join their world. We are about people creating their own worlds," said Ning Chief Executive Gina Bianchini, who co-founded Ning with Andreessen.

Bianchini and Andreessen took part in a joint interview.

Ning sites can be public or private, with the company retaining rights to run targeted advertising on member sites. But users can pay sliding monthly fees for the right to run their own advertising, substitute their own Web address, or add storage or bandwidth for high-traffic Web sites.

Ning (http://www.ning.com) is part of a new class of companies that analysts call the "do-it-yourself" Web.

Startups like Ning, Coghead and Teqlo give online users control not just over individual Web pages or sites, but the ability to create new Web applications for themselves, even if they have little or no software programming experience.

Ning focuses on consumers while the others are more business oriented. Another such company, JotSpot was acquired recently by Google Inc. as part of the Web search leader's push into the software market dominated by Microsoft.

Ning made a splash 18 months ago among Web enthusiasts when it introduced its first set of basic online applications like restaurant reviews and celebrity fan sites that it allowed users to clone in order to create Web

applications of their own.

"The whole point of providing customization and freedom is that you want
to give people something super simple at first but then, as they get more
sophisticated, you want to give them the ability to get more creative,"
Andreessen said.

It's a shift that could take years, but eventually prove as important as
the take-off of blog publishing tools five years ago, said Forrester
Research analyst Charlene Li. "People are just getting into this idea of
having more control over the environment in which they use the Web," Li
said.

Bianchini said her company will begin releasing a steady flow of new
features, every two weeks. Functions can be added to established Ning
social network sites with a simple drag and drop motion, she demonstrated
in the interview. Upcoming features could include a calendar or e-commerce
capabilities.

"If we do this right there will be hundreds of thousands of Web sites that
look different from each other," said Bianchini, who previously founded a
Web marketing firm and sold it to Japanese advertising giant Dentsu Inc.
in 2003.

Europe Threatens New Microsoft Fines

The European Union escalated its trans-Atlantic fight with Microsoft Corp.
on Thursday, threatening new multimillion fines against the software
maker over claims it is asking rivals to pay too much for information
that would help their servers work with Windows.

In response, Microsoft charged that the treatment it received from the EU
is unprecedented and harmed Europe's efforts to become a thriving
high-tech economy.

The EU said the software maker could face daily fines as high as 3 million
euros ($4 million), and accused Microsoft of protecting its own interests
by setting unreasonable prices for the "complete and accurate"
documentation competitors would need to build products that interoperate
with Windows PCs and servers.

In a so-called "statement of objections" released Thursday, the EU's
executive Commission rejected 1,500 pages of documents Microsoft submitted
to back up its pricing.

"I am therefore again obliged to take formal measures to ensure that
Microsoft complies with its obligations," EU Antitrust Commissioner Neelie
Kroes said in a statement.

Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith responded that Microsoft had asked
for feedback on its pricing proposals and documentation half a year ago,
and only Thursday received a reply thinly veiled in a threat.

"We're disappointed that this feedback is coming six months later and in
its present form," said Smith during a telephone conference. "You cannot
reach an agreement if you are just talking to yourself."

He added "the findings appear to be an attempt to regulate the pricing of our intellectual property rights on a global basis" something which would go beyond the jurisdiction of the European Union.

This is not the first time EU regulators threatened fines to push Microsoft to comply with its 2004 antitrust ruling, in which it found the company broke competition laws and abused its dominant market position.

Besides the record 497 million euro ($613 million) fine it imposed at the time of the ruling, the EU levied a 280.5 million euro ($371 million) fine last summer, saying Microsoft did not supply complete interoperability documentation.

Microsoft has reached licensing agreements with several of the companies that originally took issue with the software maker's practices and pricing, including Sun Microsystems Inc. and Novell Inc.

But the company still faces pressure in Europe from open-source software companies that want to use its technology, said Matt Rosoff, an analyst for Directions on Microsoft, an independent research group.

"Microsoft has a lot of problems with allowing its intellectual property to be incorporated into an open-source product," which may be part of the reason the issue has not yet been resolved, Rosoff said in an interview.

The EU said Thursday that three years after the landmark antitrust ruling, the U.S. software company was still using heavy-handed tactics to choke rivals in the software sector, but did not name any specific competitors.

"This is a company which apparently does not like to have to conform with antitrust decisions," said EU Commission spokesman Jonathan Todd.

Smith said the company has had better back-and-forth negotiations "in other capitals, in other countries and that is what we need in Brussels if Europe is going to have an economy that genuinely fosters technology and innovation."

Ronald Cass, chairman of the Washington-based Center for the Rule of Law, said the EU "has taken another step toward turning successful businesses into regulated utilities."

"The Commission's new effort, if pursued, will undermine innovation and take Europe further away from the sort of predictable, stable, sensible legal rules that define the rule of law," Cass said.

The EU insisted it did not want to douse innovation.

"The Commission does not want Microsoft to have to give away the fruits of its research for free," said Todd. "Microsoft is perfectly entitled to a fair share of the results of its innovation. However, the Commission decision does not allow Microsoft to charge for interoperability information based on its wn dominant position in the PC software market."

The company has four weeks to reply to the Commission's preliminary finding.

Microsoft is challenging the EU's 2004 antitrust ruling - which resulted in the order to share code and information with rivals at reasonable prices - at the EU's Court of First Instance. A decision is expected sometime this summer.

In the meantime, said Rosoff, the Directions on Microsoft analyst, "I suspect Microsoft will lower its prices to avoid paying the fines."

NY Youths In Plea Deal In MySpace Case

Two young New York men accused of trying to extort $150,000 from MySpace.com by developing code that tracked visitors pleaded no contest Monday to illegal computer access in a bargain with the prosecution.

Two counts of attempted extortion and another illegal computer access count were dropped in the deal, which gave the defendants three years probation. Each had faced up to nearly four years in prison.

Shaun Harrison, 19, and Saverio Mondelli, 20, of Suffolk County, N.Y., were accused of demanding the money as a "consulting fee" from the News Corp. subsidiary. The pair were offering the code on their own Web site for $29.95 and claimed to be developing an unbreakable version. MySpace had blocked the existing version after it was discovered.

The popular MySpace social-networking site - where people create elaborate profiles and personalize them with photos, music and video - is supposed to offer anonymity to visitors who browse the pages.

But Harrison and Mondelli's program collected e-mail addresses and Internet Protocol addresses, prosecutors said. Such information could have been used by stalkers trying to locate MySpace users, said Deputy District Attorney Jeffrey A. McGrath.

The men sold access to several versions of the code to computer users, who could then apply it to their own MySpace profiles. That type of traffic monitoring violates MySpace's rules.

The men boasted they had around 85,000 registered users of their tracking program, but investigators have not determined how much information users were able to cull, McGrath said.

The plea bargain, also agreed to by Paul L. Gabbert, attorney for the young men, severely restricts their access to computers, limits them to one e-mail address each, and requires they do 160 hours of community service and pay MySpace $13,500 in restitution.

Superior Court Commissioner Kristi Lousteau told the defendants that if they violate their agreement they could go to prison. She said they will be subject to search of their computers at any time and they may not access MySpace.com directly or indirectly.

The defendants stood before the commissioner and acknowledged the terms of the agreement, but neither spoke other than to answer "yes."

Outside court, Gabbert said that the agreement came from "the recognition that they are young and made a mistake and to give them a second chance."

He said they set up their business right out of high school, are going to college and "they will continue to be creative and not transgress the law."

McGrath said the young men, who were extremely proficient in the Web multimedia program Flash, were discovered by the operators of MySpace and were sent a "cease and desist" order by e-mail.

The pair sent a reply saying, "We will neither cease nor desist" and announced on their Web site that they were developing an even more sophisticated system that would soon be for sale, prosecutors said.

The problem for MySpace was that the pair's identities were not known because they were operating under pseudonyms.

The prosecution said the company then began "quasi negotiations" with the two. They were arrested last May when they flew to Los Angeles to collect the $150,000 but actually met with undercover Secret Service and district attorney's investigators, prosecutors said.

A telephone request for comment from MySpace was not immediately returned.

McGrath said there are other companies offering similar services on the Internet and that MySpace is constantly trying to shut them down.

Careful, 'Storm' Worm Is Infecting Blogs, Too

This week, a new variant of the so-called Storm worm was discovered insinuating itself into various blogs, Webmail, and Web-based message forums in an effort to infect even more PCs, a researcher at security firm Secure Computing said.

Principal research scientist Dmitri Alperovitch said on Monday that the worm - as known as the 'Small.DAM' Trojan that first swept into the U.S. in mid-January after ravaging Europe - is using a unique new approach to further spread itself into PCs. While the initial infection is still carried out through e-mail by offering up a link that, when clicked on, downloads a series of malware components onto a given computer once on that computer, it is able to further inject itself into the network stack as a rootkit.

After doing so, the Storm Worm can analyze all outbound Web traffic, according to Alperovitch.

Alperovitch says that when someone with an infected PC sends a message with Hotmail, Gmail, or Yahoo! Mail, or posts a message to an online forum or blog, the Trojan is actually able to add text to the entry or message.

The Storm Worm will append a 'Have you seen this?' link along with another link to what appears to be a video, according to Secure Computing. If anyone proceeds to click on that link, their computer will become infected.

Alperovitch claims that Secure Computing has seen examples of the worm's bogus postings on messages forums, including one for Men's Health, as well as in thousands of blog entries.

The best way users can protect themselves is still to refrain from clicking on such links, Alperovitch said.

At last count, thousands of computers, most in private use, had been affected in the U.S., and although most users will not notice the Trojan,

many antivirus companies including Authentium, BitDefender, clamAV, eSafe, FProt, Kaspersky, Norman, Sophos, and Virusbuster have been able to successfully detected the worm.

Rinbot Virus Rises, Hits Media Giant

Just two days after a new variant of the malicious Storm worm wreaked havoc for I.T. administrators, the malware forecast turned even more bleak as the insidious Rinbot virus began to circultate once again, hitting a major U.S. corporation on Thursday.

Turner Broadcasting System, a division of Time Warner and parent company of CNN, confirmed that the virus hit its systems yesterday - marking the second attack the company has gone public with.

The malicious Zotob worm infiltrated the news network in 2005, and the breach was broadcast live on air. TBS company spokesperson Shirley Powell said yesterday's attack had minimal impact, and the company is actively working to rectify the situation.

The latest strain of the Rinbot virus appears to be targeting Microsoft SQL servers and a weakness in Symantec antivirus software, for which the company has already issued a patch.

Reportedly, the virus moves around the Internet by exploiting basic passwords - any one of roughly 200 passwords with easy-to-guess names like "password." Once the virus penetrates a system, it can turn the computer into a zombie for launching spam, sending out spyware, and blasting out denial-of-service attacks.

Security experts from I.T. security firm Sophos said what makes this particular virus different from other malware is that it exploits a Symantec software vulnerability on a Windows platform, whereas, traditionally, hackers targeted Microsoft's programs directly.

"There are people looking for holes in all software programs either to publicize it or to take advantage of it," said Graham Cluley, a senior technology consultant at Sophos. "It's not just a Microsoft problem."

Cluley said he believes this latest strain is the seventh version of Rinbot, which first appeared in March 2005. Cluley also noted that, other than Time Warner, he hasn't received any reports of infected systems, leading him to believe the latest round of the Rinbot might be more hype than actual risk.

"When CNN got hit by Zotob, it became a huge media story. I think it's all a bit of a storm in a tea cup," he said. "We see new malware all the time." Sophos discovered 7,752 pieces of new malicious software just last month.

Security experts don't discount the increasing threat of viruses, though, especially in light of the Storm worm attack earlier this week. Cluley stressed the importance of security software as way to keep systems safe.

Phishing Sites Explode on the Web

Think the new built-in phishing filters in Internet Explorer 7 and Firefox 2 will protect your private data? Think again. The number of sites devoted to phishing skyrocketed last year, and the number of Americans taken in by phishing schemes has nearly doubled. In November 2006, the last month for which data is available, the Anti-Phishing Working Group found 37,439 new sites, up an astounding 709 percent from the 4630 sites in November of 2005.

Last October, both Mozilla and Microsoft released new versions of their browsers that use blacklists to block access to known phishing sites. In response, resourceful phishers are flooding new fake Web sites onto the Internet too quickly for them all to be shut down or blacklisted.

The alarming ease with which the fraudsters changed course, plus other new phishing tactics, makes some security experts say that phishers have the upper hand in the war against online fraud.

"Ultimately," warns Zulfikar Ramzan, who is a senior principal researcher with Symantec's Security Response Group, "technologies that rely heavily on blacklists are going to be useless."

According to RSA, a security vendor, hackers in January started selling a phishing kit that lets criminals set up very convincing fake Web sites with little effort. The fake site pulls images and layouts from the real site, usually a bank or other financial institution, and passes the user's information back to the real site to mimic a regular log-in – while keeping a copy of the account data for the criminals.

The draw, of course, is ever-increasing profits. Research firm Gartner estimates that 3.5 million Americans gave up sensitive information to phishers in 2006, an 84 percent jump from the previous year – for a total loss of $2.8 billion. One single phishing gang, called Rock Phish, is estimated to have taken in more than $100 million.

According to security experts, Rock Phish has pioneered many of the techniques that have contributed to the recent jump in phishing sites. And the image spam that hides its pitch from filters by embedding it in a picture was a Rock Phish invention, these experts say. On some days this one group, which specializes in spoofing U.S. and European financial institutions, may account for as many as one-half of all the phishing sites in operation, according to researchers.

Heuristic scanning may help combat the scourge. Instead of depending on a blacklist of known phishing sites, it analyzes a site's behavior, looking for techniques commonly used by phishers. IE 7 uses heuristics, as does the free SiteAdvisor browser add-on for IE and Firefox.

An emerging standard for a new type of site certification – called Extended Validation Secure Sockets Layer, or EV SSL--may also help. To get this certificate, sites will have to be checked out by third parties like VeriSign or Entrust to make sure that they at least appear to be legitimate. On such sites, the browser address bar will turn green.

Microsoft supports EV SSL in its IE 7 browser, and major online-commerce sites such as PayPal have now started to come on board as well.

But if the current surge in phishing sites demonstrates anything, it's that phishers can and do get around automated tools and procedures to

protect their sizable profits. Recently they have been developing new
technologies that could well thwart protection measures like EV SSL,
according to Avivah Litan, a Gartner analyst.

Litan, who doubts EV SSL certificates will have much impact on phishing,
believes security technology firms deserve some of the blame for the
growing phishing threat.

"The security industry has been a little arrogant," she explains. "I don't
think that people realize how sophisticated these [online] criminals are."

Although no magic bullet may exist now (or ever) to safeguard us all,
there is one simple way to protect yourself from the majority of phishing
attempts: Never click a link in an e-mail or on a third-party site to go
to any of your financial accounts. If, instead, you always use your own
bookmark or type in the address, even when you're 100 percent certain that
the e-mail is legitimate, you should be safe.

Automated tools, such as the free Password Safe and PwdHashutilities can
still provide help. But to combat ever-adapting phishers, your best
protection remains...you.

U.S. Presidential Hopefuls Flock to YouTube

Top White House candidates unveiled their own YouTube video channels on
Thursday, pushing the 18-month-old Web video-sharing site even farther
into the U.S. political mainstream.

Google Inc.'s YouTube, best known for short, amusing videos made by users
at home, says You Choose '08 (http://www.youtube.com/youchoose) will allow
candidates to control how they exchange views with voters.

Democrats including Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John Edwards and Bill
Richardson have signed up to have their own channels. So have Republicans
John McCain, Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani.

They can post a video in which they speak on a given issue while members
of the public will be able post a video response or questions for the
candidate.

Politicians have the final say about what appears on their channels, but
they still may be unable to prevent being caught up in what became known
last year as the "macaca" phenomenon.

Republican Senator George Allen of Virginia, lost a closely fought
election after getting some unwanted publicity when a video showed up on
YouTube of him calling a rival's staffer "macaca" - an African monkey and
sometimes a racial slur. The rival's staffer was of Indian origin.

Jordan Hoffner, YouTube director of content partnerships, said candidates
might get the most benefit from their channels by being as open as
possible.

"I think the politicians will be better served by letting the dialogue
with the public take over," said Hoffner. "Our users are very smart and
savvy and they can see through something if it's not genuine."

U.S. presidential candidates are increasingly taking advantage of online video to get their message out. Both Clinton and Edwards opened their campaigns with online messages to voters.

This week McCain launched a channel on Veoh Networks, a smaller online video rival site to YouTube. Veoh founder Dmitry Shapiro said other politicians would soon be joining the site to establish their own channels.

"We live in a world where people want to hear directly from their politicians and not sound bites filtered by editors. Nobody believes the media is impartial," Shapiro said.

E-mail Signatures, Recipients Can Suffer From Info Overload

The electronic John Hancock is becoming even more embellished.

Increasingly, the e-mail signature is no longer just an inverted letterhead (name, title, company name, address and phone number). It's a mini-rØsumØ, complete with website, blog address, IM screen name (or two), Skype account, compendium of company accolades and bit of borrowed aphorism or ginned-up maxim - all stacked up to the extent that the e-mail signature often stretches longer than the e-mail itself.

The result, manners mavens say, demonstrates at best a lack of respect for the reader's time - and at worst an inflated sense of the sender's self-worth.

Instead of communicating basic contact information, signatures - both for personal use and, especially, work - have become messages within messages. But the bottom of an e-mail isn't where recipients should be looking for a message about who the sender is, says Cindy Post Senning of the Emily Post Institute. Besides, "people don't read them. I know they don't."

Post Senning likens today's signature transgressions to the early, misguided days of cellphone use, when, for instance, people would take calls at meetings or parties instead of discreetly ducking out of the room. "This is little like signature-line anarchy. There haven't been any rules about it."

And so "they can get out of control," says Joy Weaver, a Dallas-based corporate etiquette expert who began noticing the bloated postscripts in her inbox about a year ago. Some have exhorted her to vote. Others have passed on snippets of favorite Scripture. Still others have cheered on a favorite sports team.

"Each time a person sends out an e-mail, he needs to decide: Is this information on my signature appropriate?" says Weaver, who advocates keeping them to a maximum of five or six lines. If "Hook 'em Horns," the slogan of the University of Texas-Austin, is destined for an avid UT fan, "obviously we know that's going to be a great first impression. But if that's going to an OU (University of Oklahoma) fan, that's going to be annoying."

A little brand awareness in the form of, say, a logo is OK, Weaver says. But the signature that asked her to click to watch a company's marketing video? "That's pushing it. It just seems desperate."

Curtis Hougland makes no apologies for his 13-line signature. His New York business, Attention PR, is about, well, grabbing a client's attention in an ever-competitive industry. Which means his signature is "a little more provocative. It's about using that valuable real estate you have through correspondence to say something."

With a lot of people, including those he represents, as well as those he's pitching, this is the only way he communicates.

So, even though he assumes that no more than 10% or 20% of readers get through his prose, the signature ends with a borrowed or self-scribed adage ("Attention, not information, is today's scarce and valuable commodity") that he replaces every month or so.

In his field, it also helps to be available 24/7. Hence, Hougland, 39, volunteers his office phone and cell numbers, two e-mail addresses and an IM handle - and that's the pared-down contact list.

He hasn't received any complaints. "It's innocuous, it's at the bottom - a little nugget if they want it, easily tuned out if they don't." But Hougland has removed the swollen send-off from his reply e-mails. "That just seems obnoxious, like you're throwing it in their face a little bit."

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